

REMARKS

The acknowledgment of the claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. §119 and the receipt of the priority document is noted with appreciation.

The acceptance of the drawings filed July 16, 2001, by the Examiner is also noted with appreciation.

The specification has been carefully reviewed and amended as appropriate to correct minor errors. In particular, the Abstract of the Disclosure has been amended to conform with MPEP §608.01(b) as required by the Examiner. In addition, the Brief Description of the Drawings has been moved to be before, rather than after, the Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments.

Claims 19 to 32 now appear in the application. Original claims 1 to 18 have been canceled by this amendment.

The claimed invention is directed to an online shopping method and system that provides improved anonymity for a customer. The online shopping method as recited in new claim 19 involves an anonymous service provider which handles and delivers packages to a customer, a shop receives an order from the customer over a network and transfers ordered goods to the anonymous service provider for delivery to the customer, and an electronic money accounting organization engages in monetary transactions with the shop and issues electronic money the customer uses when purchasing goods from the shop. The method comprises the steps of "opening by the shop on the network a homepage for electronic shopping", "registering by the customer with the anonymous service provider", and "providing by the anonymous service provider to the customer an anonymous ID upon request of a registered customer and temporarily maintains the anonymous ID in an anonymous ID database for a predetermined limited period of time, the anonymous ID database being accessed by the anonymous service provider to validate an anonymous ID and to correlate the anonymous ID with delivery information for the customer". Once the customer is provided with an anonymous ID, the online shopping method further comprises the steps of

“ordering over the network by the customer using the anonymous ID provided by the anonymous service provider and designating payment by electronic money from the electronic money accounting organization”, “requesting by the shop confirmation from the anonymous service provider that the anonymous ID provided by the customer is valid and, if valid, requesting payment for the ordered goods from the electronic money accounting organization”, and “if the customer has sufficient electronic money with the electronic money accounting organization, completing acceptance of the order by printing a first slip bearing the anonymous ID and attaching the slip to the ordered goods and delivering the goods to the anonymous service provider”. When the anonymous service provider receives the goods, the method further comprises the steps of “correlating by the anonymous service provider the anonymous ID with delivery information for delivery of the ordered goods to the customer”, “printing by the anonymous service provider a second slip bearing the delivery information and replacing the first slip with the second slip attached to the goods”, and “delivering by the anonymous service provider the ordered goods to the customer.” Since the shop employs only the anonymous ID provided by the customer when transferring the goods to the anonymous service provider, the acquisition by the shop of personal information relating to the customer can be prevented. The anonymous ID representing the delivery address of the customer remains anonymous; the shop can have no direct knowledge of the delivery address of the customer. Only the anonymous service provider can designate the delivery address of the customer based on the anonymous code.

To transfer an article to the anonymous service provider, the shop attaches to the article a first slip 100 (Figure 3) on which an anonymous code is printed, and then delivers the article to the anonymous service provider. The anonymous service provider then replaces the first slip on the article with a second slip 200 (Figure 4) on which the personal information for the customer is printed, and delivers the article to the customer. Since the first slip is replaced by the anonymous service provider, the shop can not acquire any personal customer

information, and the anonymity of the customer can be maintained. Thus, this system is easily implemented simply by replacing the slips.

The anonymous service provider has a server which maintains a database for storing anonymous IDs which can be access to correlate with delivery address information for a customer. This server comprises code generation means for generating anonymous IDs.

Claims 1 to 3, 6, 8, 9, 11 to 14, and 18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,006,200 to Boies et al. Claims 7, 10, and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over the patent to Boies et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,529,885 to Johnson. Claims 4 and 5 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over the patents to Boies et al. and Johnson. Claims 15 and 16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over the patents to Boies et al. and Johnson. Claims 1 and 2 were additionally rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. These rejections are believed to be moot with the cancellation of claims 1 to 18 and the addition of new claims 19 to 34. More particularly, it is respectfully submitted that the new claims 19 to 34 are patentable over the prior art.

Specifically addressing the prior art, Boies et al. disclose a system in which transactions are conducted on the Internet, by telephone or directly with anonymity and privacy. A customer's shipping address is encoded by a multi-digit identifier which is stored in the database of a trusted third party, preferably the shipping company. A user of the system need only identify themselves to a vendor by this multi-digit identifier which prints the identifier in machine readable form on a package delivered to the shipper. According to Boies et al., the shipper has an agreement with vendors to use this identifier with all shipping requests. In other words, the identifier is not only used when placing an order, it also provides the customer's shipping address, albeit in encoded form, whereas the claim 19 recites "providing by the anonymous service provider to the customer an anonymous ID upon request of a registered customer and temporarily maintains the anonymous

ID in an anonymous ID database for a *predetermined limited period of time*, the anonymous ID database being accessed by the anonymous service provider to validate an anonymous ID and to *correlate the anonymous ID with delivery information for the customer*” (emphasis added). A similar limitation is recited in claim 26. Claim 20 recites that “a random sequence of alphanumeric characters is used for the anonymous ID.” This random sequence bears no information of the customer’s address, even in encoded form. A similar limitation is recited in claim 27.

Johnson discloses methods and systems for securely carrying out electronic transactions including electronic drafts, wherein payment on at least one of the drafts is contingent upon the removal of an associated contingency. The method includes establishing a secure computer site accessible only by authenticated parties to the transaction and by any authenticated contingency approver. Johnson, unlike either the claimed invention or the patent to Boies et al., is not concerned with anonymous online shopping. The Johnson electronic transactions method and system does not contemplate an electronic money accounting organization that engages in monetary transactions and issues electronic money the customer uses when purchasing goods. In other words, while Johnson uses encrypting methods in communications between entities, there is no effort to maintain a customer’s anonymity from the shop. Further, Johnson does not make up the deficiencies of Boies et al. noted above. The combination of Johnson with Boies et al. would not result in the claimed invention.

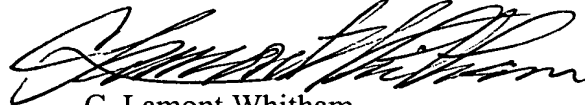
In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully requested that the application be reconsidered, that claims 19 to 34 be allowed, and that the application be passed to issue.

Should the Examiner find the application to be other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the local telephone number listed below to discuss any other changes deemed necessary in a telephonic or personal interview.

A provisional petition is hereby made for any extension of time necessary

for the continued pendency during the life of this application. Please charge any fees for such provisional petition and any deficiencies in fees and credit any overpayment of fees to Attorney's Deposit Account No. 50-0510.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Lamont Whitham", is written over the typed name.

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